



December 1991

APA-TECH 76

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APA Policies:

- Minac (Minimum level of activities required) is two somethings per year.
- Issues will be mailed the first week of even-numbered months, so contributions must reach me by the first day of said even-numbered months. Things which reach me late will be held until the next scheduled mailing.
- The next deadline is February 1st, 1992.
- The copy count is twenty-two (22).

Your current postal account is: \$ 103

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TRANSPORTER
TOPICS

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Number 64

First, my apologies for missing last issue. Ten thousand Lackbandi storm troopers occupied Frankfort, and most of them used my living room as a boarding house.

Would you believe that I forgot the deadline?

After being late for the August issue and missing the October issue completely, this contribution is also getting in late. However, I do have some very good reasons. First, my printer has been having problems lately, and although it is now working fine I am still catching up with my correspondence. Also, I have been practicing hard on my martial arts, because I take my test for Yodan (fifth degree black belt) on December 7.

My writing career stubbornly refuses to take off. For instance, not only did Del Rey Books reject my novel, they added insult to injury by loosing the first page of the synopsis. The book is currently at Ace.

None of my short stories have sold, either, although one of them has earned me some of the nicest rejection letters in the history of publishing. I keep getting such comments as "I like this, but it isn't the kind of material we can use." You'd think someone would have the courage of their convictions.

On the other hand, fanzine publishers love my stuff. Recently, a story of mine ("The Cold From Beyond") was published in the Centaur's Gatherum. A few days later I received a letter from one of my correspondents in which she practically begged for permission to use the story in her vampire fanzine! She has even offered to do some of the illustrations.

Currently, I am working on a story which features anthropomorphics as some of the main characters. I am not a big furry fan but I do like the genre, and this story is one of those interesting ideas which just demands to be written. I sent a rough draft of the first half to an anthropomorphic artist I correspond with, to get his opinion on whether the story was worth finishing. He wrote back a few days later, offering to draw the illustrations for the story! I guess that means yes.

Those of you interested in gaming may have seen the "Classic Organizations" book for Champions. In this, Hero Games reprints some of the Organizations that have appeared in past publications, converting them to the new system that came out last year. One of the groups portrayed is my "Neutral Ground."

Unfortunately, the editors not only failed to correct the mistakes they made in the original edition (after I sent them corrections twice), they managed to make a large set of new ones! This only reinforces my vow to abstain from writing for gaming companies. There is too much hassle for too little reward.

I am still teaching self defense to some friends, though our schedule has been rather sporadic lately. Everyone in the group is a fan, and we have been going to conventions and other events. There have also been a death in the family for one woman, some illnesses both of members and in their families, and some other problems. We are all interested in continuing, however, and hopefully will get back on track soon.

The Lexfa Halloween party was a success this year, as usual. I went as a Herald of Valdemar. This is an easy costume; I took a karate gi, added a white felt cape (6' by 6' to begin with, smaller after being hemmed) and painted an old pair of boots (With inch-and-a-half heels!) and a belt white, put white tape on the sheath for my large machete and painted the handle white, and added a white broadcloth belt pouch. Quite comfortable, though the cape was rather warm. Naturally, I didn't win anything! One young lady in the group went as a plainsrider from the same series of novels, and we posed together in several pictures.

Mercedes Lackey is the guest of honor at Rivercon next August. I may wear the costume there, though that cape is rather warm for use during the summer.

Why is everyone so distraught over the current economic slump? I mean, sure, there's hardship, but we have already started the upswing of the 20-year cycle. Things should be improving within a year, maybe in a few months.

I really don't understand why people are acting so mystified over this. The cycle has been known for decades, and even though the causes remain a mystery, that it has happened, is happening and will continue to happen is certain. Yet the economists and elected officials act as if they were caught completely by surprise, and have no idea what comes next.

MAILING COMMENTS

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Crumbcrunchers: Having just experienced computer withdrawal due to printer problems, I can empathize with your mouse problems. * Re. Yr. Cmnt. Me.: While mowing the lawn last year, I was stung by something that came out of nowhere. I never even saw what it was. After the leaves fell I found a huge hornet's nest in a tree near where I was stung. I suspect the culprit was a hornet which disliked noise. *

Bob and Connie: Okay, welcome back. * I hope you will understand if I am less than enthusiastic about Windows. Everything I have heard about it from computer-professional

friends, nearly everything I have read about it in magazines, and the experiences of the people at work, tell me that it is not general useful. That is, it is handy in some applications, but for most purposes it is a memory-hungry monster through which running programs takes more time and user effort. * Your house was built in 1960, huh? Mine dates from 1940. Move over, I got seniority! * One of the young women in our local SF club is painting shirts and denim jackets. So far this is just for friends, but I believe that she plans to earn some money with this hobby. *

Second... (To none?): I am unable to attend most fannish functions outside the Bluegrass area, due to financial and other commitments. * I commiserate with you on allergies. I take shots, and still need Actifed almost every day. The problem is that the building where I work is full of dust and mold. * I have several comics to recommend. "The Incredible Hulk," "Flash," "Rhudi prrt," "The Desert Peach," "Stinz," "Magnus, Robot Fighter," "Doctor Solar" and "The Jaguar." I collect very few comics for their future value, though I have occasionally speculated. Mostly, I save the things I like. * I enjoyed meeting you at Worldcon, though this was all too brief and unmemorable. I just wish there had been more time to talk. The problem with such a big convention is that there's so much going on people have a lot of trouble getting together for socializing. Even when one party is free, the others are busy, assuming they can be found! *

Not Done Yet: You left on your trip at 3:47 AM!? You're mad, mad I say!! * If I ever attend one of these events, I'm bringing my ear protectors - and my fire extinguisher! *

Words (Scott Abfalter): See above about my experiences with getting published. * You might try writing to Dean and Lia Graf about submitting your stories to their horror fanzine, "The Edge." No payment, but you get a copy of the issue where your story appears. The address is:

Tigerwing Press
6250 Holabird St. #1
San Diego, CA 92120-3545

APA-Tech 75

Geography: Interesting; we keep speaking metaphorically about how rapidly the world is changing, but your profession must deal with the results of that change in a practical manner. * Don't you just hate weapons policies? They won't even let me bring in the rocket launcher. It has rubberized treads. (-: * Say, howcum nobody invited me to this year's dry ice capades at Chicon? (Okay, so I was occupied with other things and other people. I think I was at a party after the Hugos.) *

Crumbcrunchers: Re. Yr. Cmmt. Marlene's writing: Does it seem to be a general rule that people who read well write poorly? * The orange cat sounds like one my brother-in-law keeps. Half the kittens in the neighborhood look like Tom, and the other half take after their mother. * My twentieth highschool reunion is coming up soon, and I'm looking forward to it. Most of the guys who used to bully me are now fat and balding. There are advantages to being a late bloomer. *

Missing Sizable Automobile: Nice to hear from you again. (People tell me that I am more aurally oriented than visually.) * Part of my own motivation for remaining single is selfish, such as the fact that there things I want to do which are not compatible with having a family. On the other hand, I honestly feel that my writing can help people, so there is a selfless aspect, as well. * "What's wrong with NASA?" How many pages do I have? * I have seen the results of a survey done by a couple of fans for their doctorate (I believe) which was performed at Rivercon a few years ago. Their analysis is that fans are much more intelligent than the average population, and at least as sane. Their neuroses and psychoses simply go in different directions than those of "normal" folk. Yes, your criticisms are valid, but most of them apply to a minority. Also, remember that big conventions are a stressful environment, and people behave differently there than they would at, say, a monthly club meeting. I know that I do. That's why I like relaxacons so much. * Congratulations on your success with Turn Left at Orion. One of these days I'll remember to order it! (-: *

Cheezy 'Zine (Barry Gehm): My supervisor at work is sometimes critical of the time I "waste" performing backups and various diagnostic rituals on my assigned computer, but as a result of this I rarely have any trouble. From what you say, I get the impression that the machine which had the problem is used by several people. That may be a large part of the cause. * A friend of mine, one of the members of the local SF club, is also looking for work in biochemistry. So far, no luck, despite months of trying. (Now, isn't that just what you needed to cheer you up?) * You were on more panels than I managed to attend! *

Second: I have never heard "Ask Dr. Science" on either of the local NPR stations. *

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Chicon V

(Worldcon 1991)

by

Rodford E. Smith

I carpooled to Chicago with Janie Broughton (Our Fearless Leader, Honorable Dictator of Lexfa). We decided to take Red, my Mustang hatchback, after a comparison with her car, and the realization that mine had more room. We agreed to leave on the morning of the day before the con. The room reservations were all arranged, and we were anxious to go.

Janie arrived on Wednesday morning right on time. We packed the car and set out. The trip was uneventful, though it was interesting to watch Janie drive when we switched off for a while. (Yes, Janie, the 5.0 Mustang will do 65 in third. It will also so 35 in fifth. Neither practice is recommended.)

One thing about this trip: I will never complain about the condition of Kentucky roads again. As soon as we crossed the state line into Indiana the condition of the pavement changed drastically for the worse. This continued all the way to the hotel, through two states and inside Chicago.

I was driving and Janie navigating when we entered Chicago. We had a few anxious moments when we thought we had passed a landmark where we were supposed to turn, but actually arrived at the Hilton without trouble. There we unloaded Red, and I turned my keys anxiously over to the attendant, not to seem them for another five days.

By arriving a day early we were able to get through both hotel and convention reservation with little wait. Unfortunately, after confirming that we had a room with double beds reserved, the clerk told us that only a single bed was available. I fussed a bit, but the hotel promised to provide us with a rollaway at no charge, so we settled in. Actually, we got two rollaway beds for some reason. Since there were five people in the room that was a happy accident.

Because I drove to this Worldcon I decided to bring cookies. I baked two double batches, filling every can I own. Even that was not quite enough; except for a few I reserved for myself and my roommates, all of them were gone by Sunday.

A Worldcon is such a busy place that members have to make choices as to what to do, based on their personal priorities. Since I am slightly more interested in meeting with and talking to people than in attending panels, I only attended one panel. I did manage to get to the General Technics meeting, as well as the masquerade, but no other scheduled events except for parties!

One of my greatest pleasures at Chicon was meeting some of the people I have been corresponding with. I am not a major furry fan, but through my association with the Centaurs Gatherum I have "met" by mail a number of anthropomorphic artists. Some of them were at the convention. Because of this, I spent more of my time with this group than with the folks I normally associate with at conventions. While I missed these old friends, I did manage to have a lot of fun.

One of the first people I saw was Samanda Jeude, in the hotel registration area. We spoke for a few minutes and exchanged cat pictures. Then Janie and I took the luggage to our room.

Immediately thereafter we went to the convention registration area. They would not be open for regular members for a while, so we wandered around the area. I ran into several familiar people (immediately apologizing) including Bill Higgins. I have the blurry photo to prove it.

After finally getting registered Janie and I separated. I cruised around the hotel, re-familiarizing myself with the layout. Much of it was still familiar from the previous Chicon, though there were some changes. The interesting fountains were still there, and my favorite hideaway was now even more secluded, since the bar above it had been closed. I found the Louisville in '94 suite, where I was pressed into service pressing tape to the ceiling to support ribbons, part of the decorations. (I was forced into this in spite of screaming "Height discrimination!" several times.) I was very sad that the Louisville bid lost, by the way. Not only would it have been nice to have a Worldcon within 50 miles of my home, I think it would have been a very good convention.

The rest of Wednesday passed with little of interest happening. Janie and I made contacts with friends old and new and found some places for obtaining food, then settled in the Louisville suite for a while before retiring.

Thursday was much busier. Not only was the convention proper now open, but our remaining roommates arrived. While Cruising the Dealer's room, I encountered several people I had met before, as well as seeing for the first time several folks I had previously known only through letters. I also managed to get registered as a photographer for the masquerade.

While cruising around the dealers' room I located a book I had found at Rivercon the month before but hadn't been able to afford due to lack of funds. A few other purchases were made, but for the most part I was saving my money.

Friday was pretty much more of the same. There were encounters with friends and acquaintances, as well as with the editors of a couple of I contribute to. I also got invited to the Friday night artists' party, hosted by those suicidal people from Anime House.

It was at this party that one of my greatest nightmares came true. I was asked to draw something. I knew that this was one of the hazards of hanging around with artists, but assumed that I could beg off. Not this time. I gave them "Barbarian Robot With Light Saber (Mixed Genre)." This came about because everyone was required to put something on paper, even if it was only a stick paper. The result was a room (and hallway!) full of people madly scribbling, erasing and inking. "Anime House Follies" was later produced from the results, and a free copy sent to all contributors.

I had brought a large can of cookies to the party, and as I

made ready to leave I was distressed to notice that it was over half full. Since my cookies are usually very popular I found this puzzling. I asked if anyone wanted any cookies before I left - and was caught in a feeding frenzy. I was luck to get the can back! Someone even licked the wax paper. (Okay, so that was me.) I later figured out what had happened. Someone had put the lid back on the can so the cookies would stay fresh, and everyone else figured that meant the can was empty!

Saturday was the leadup to the masquerade. I found myself in the "Available Light" area, but since no-one was checking badges I snuck over to the "Flash" zone. I discovered later than my new strobe, bought only a couple of months before, is fine for closeup work, but underpowered for long-range shots. Most of my masquerade photos came out a but underexposed. Oh, well, live and learn.

There were some excellent costumes. Ask to see them sometime at a convention; I will probably have the album with me.

The rest of the convention is a bit of a blur. The Sunday night furry party was fun, as it was held in a suite and there was almost enough room. I got to see a lot of interesting artwork, a fireworks display (not our fault) and talk to a lot of people.

Monday there was just enough time to make a quick tour of the con, pack, say goodbye to our roommates and get the car. This may not sound like much, but given the fact the nearly everyone was leaving about the same time made the process very slow. Janie and I finally got underway in the early afternoon. The trip back was fairly uneventful, except for the fact that Janie was wearing a costume. We got some strange looks when we stopped for supper.

It was a good con. I had fun, met and talked with a number of people, saw a lot of interesting things, and was invited to contribute to several projects. I'm glad I went. Next year, though, I'm staying an extra day to avoid the hassle.

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Well, the last issue was rather skinny, and I feel partly to blame. Hopefully, this massive missive will help return APA-Tech to robust good health.

"Call me if you ever feel like letting go, and we'll remember the days of Kid Dynamo"*;



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* From the song Kid Dynamo off the Buggles album "The Age of Plastic."

Eventually, acronyms take on a life of their own. Their meaning is remembered but the words behind them fall into oblivion and the pronunciation gets corrupted. Here are some pearls: Seecube-I: C3I: Command Control Communications and Intelligence. Mehsarc: MAISRC: Major Automated Information System Review Committee. Dissyfour: DISC4: Some government agency, I forgot which one.

And as soon as one is conversant with a sufficiently large numbers of acronyms to suitably obscure the meaning of one's thoughts, these acronyms will become Ohbee-e (Overtaken By Events) and disappear from the vocabulary.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Our client in St. Louis is the first entity I have worked with, capable of multiple 180 degrees gyrations without ever ending up twice in the same place. Decisions are taken by committee, but are likely to be recanted on a moment's notice. A bull session with the boss might suffice to supersede the best rationale. Any decision process is an attempt to perpetuate survival, NOT to achieve the most meaningful result.

The decision process of a civil servant is governed by the following simple rules:

- (1) Never decide by yourself: you could be held responsible.
- (2) Always decide by committee: it is never too late to claim ownership of a good idea.
- (3) If the committee is unable to reach a consensus: reschedule the meeting.
- (4) If providence does not enlighten the committee: expand it. Invite your neighbor, your neighbor's uncle and your neighbor's uncle's dog. Keep discussing the same issues until somebody gives in.
- (5) If nobody gives in: defer to higher authority.
- (6) If no higher authority is available: change topic. Try to agree on the weather, you may reach consensus yet.
- (7) If you still don't reach consensus: keep discussing. The problem may solve itself.
- (8) If the problem persists: wait some more. Congress might change its mind.
- (9) If Congress does not change its mind: hire a contractor. The contractor will make the decision for you.
- (10) If the decision was wrong: fire the contractor. Everybody knows that contractors aren't worth their money.

And that's where we come in. Lesson one: politics in DC is about as baroque as elsewhere. Lesson two: DC is run by people, and people have their quirks. Civil servants are as touchy about their turf as Swiss Bankers about their good name. It may be true democracy in action, but if you step on some sensitive ego you run out of democracy mighty fast. Seen from afar, this country bears the distinction of clean and straightforward politics. From close up it's like any other anthill.

Here is a DC story for you. It describes a particular drill that USAF management likes to pull. I partook in a series of meetings in and around DC with representatives of various services and agencies. Rather unexpectedly, during a recess, the air force

representative asked to hold a segment of the meeting with government personnel only. The request was granted and the majority of participants left the room, all of them being contractors. You may ask, what was the big secret that could not be shared? Really, there was none. The big boys were just having a jolly good time, conducting a completely content free discussion without the pesky contractors in the way.

But then again, other services denigrate the USAF. The latest I heard is a reference to the "air force salute". No, this is not another smart way to greet a fellow citizen. The air force salute is a shoulder shrug, like saying: "I don't know, don't ask me", implying that the folks in blue uniform are not the greatest decision makers this side of the NATO.

And there are plenty more stories like these around in DC. I just hope somebody can spare the time to run the country.

CQ, CQ, THIS IS NOVEMBER EIGHT QUEBEC VICTOR TANGO

Just in case you don't know yet: Valli got her ham ticket. She now owns a handheld two meter transceiver. I am an amateur radio enthusiast because I like the technology. Valli is in it for the talk: Ham Radio is instant companionship, just about wherever you go. I typically run out of words after the station identification and the basic radio related stuff. Valli recognizes the guys on the Catalpa and Hazel Park repeater by their voices. She also is one of the very few YLs (Young Ladies who are hams) in the area. This, of course, makes her well known.

Amateur Radio also adds to our family life: we have met on the air more than once. Just recently we discussed mundane things like shopping and dinner menu on the air. I had just flown in from St. Louis, and was driving home by car from City Airport to Birmingham. Valli was driving in from a client visit in Toledo, OH. Radio communication spared us the need to meet at home, decide about dinner and then leave again to go shopping. When we both came in range, "we met on the DART" repeater (146.640 MHz-). N8QVT asked KA9WGP to stop at a store and bring some food. KA9WGP suggested turkey steak and N8QVT agreed. Both N8QVT and KA9WGP exchanged their latest QTHs (current location) and ETA (estimated time of arrival). Thus I stopped over at a Farmer Jack's and got what we needed, Valli found time to refuel her car, and we both arrived home together: we practically met in the drive way. It could not have been organized better.

Another occasion brought us both to Toledo, OH. Valli had some work to do at a client site. Since it was a Sunday, I came along for the ride. Unfortunately Valli's time plan was entirely unpredictable, but both Valli and I brought our handheld transceivers. So we agreed to meet on the air when Valli was done. We agreed on a particular repeater and then split. It worked like a charm. Valli spent much less time than she thought at the client and could let me know right away that she was done. I got the car washed, and was just coming out of a "Target" store when the call reached me. Thus I went and picked Valli up and we had the rest of the afternoon together in Toledo.

I am sure that the hams in our area occasionally get to smile at some of our on-the-air domesticity. Better yet, non hams get their share of exposure too. When we go places, we have our radios with us, and they do show. Mine is clipped to the belt. We go shopping that way and we go to the restaurant that way. I am sure that to some people we look like undercover cops. Valli had her radio at work too and one day showed it to one of her more technical coworkers. "Amateur what??" Eyes glazed over. "Why would you do that, that's what cellular telephones are for." Oh well, it is not easy to get understanding for the fascination of amateur radio in the corporate world. I have

been luckier in this regard. I got to talk about amateur radio with a partner of our firm. I explained to him that Amateur Radio was about as important to me than Golfing was to him. Inevitably we talked about business contacts and networking. When I pointed out that my Radio Club in St. Louis was sponsored by MONSANTO, that we had a repeater on the RALSTON PURINA building, and that our chief technician was one of the directors of the local power company, I think he understood that there was more to Amateur Radio than just a bunch of overweight tinkerers exchanging inanities of the air. However, he really preferred playing Golf. And that's ok; I prefer ham radio.

LAST BOOKS READ . . .

>Joe Haldeman - The Hemingway Hoax (Avon Books, New York, 1991)<
Somewhere between fiction and science fiction. Great challenge for Hemingway lovers: plenty of references and innuendos. Parallel worlds with a new twist. The author had an inspiration, but ran out of it before reaching took. Stop reading on page 130: you will sleep better. Recommended if you like Hemingway, or Haldeman, otherwise don't bother.

>The Journal of Don Francisco Saavedra de Sangronis 1780 - 1783 (University of Florida Press)<
The title says it. But not all. This book is a modern novel. It covers the Spanish campaign to the Caribbean, South America and the siege of Pensacola. Uneasy alliance with the French, war with the English. Not bloody, but not merciful either. Factual and concrete. Casualties, illnesses, logistics, communications ni (Pantheon Books, New York, 1985)
Weird, weird, weird! Its so weird that it rates more as a spoof on science fiction than actual science fiction. A hodge podge of eccentric ideas loosely held together by a thinly woven storyline. Intelligent mice, stubborn computers, psychopathic telepaths. The ending? I have no idea, I never got there. You must like unusual stuff to finish this book. If you like Hitchhikers of the Galaxy you have a chance. If you don't, no dice.

>The Business Value of Computers - Paul A. Strassman (The Information, 1988)<
Paul Strassmann is the Director for Defense Information. DoD's CIO. The book delves into the mistakes of the past: how not to select computer systems and squander your employer's money. It dwells on the past, but there is no recipe for success. I stopped rea in a boardroom, giving orders. If you research failures in Computer History, this book is a must, otherwise, any text about business reengineering will do better.

See you around

Joachim

Note for you tecriting this text on a COMPAQ LTE using WORD for WINDOWS. The LTE is somewhat awkward and bulky. Thus I electronically uploaded this text to my PSION MC 400 and completed it using PSION's native editor. Than I transferred this text to my stationary COMPUADD 320c from there electronically to Gabe and Audrey's BBS. Final editing: courtesy of Audrey Helou on Ventura software.

CRUMBCRUNCHERS, INC.
P.O. Box 98
Ripley, OH 45167

Happy holidays everyone!

A few updates on our family. We have a new issue of HOBSON'S out (finally, you say!), featuring an article on Space Station Freedom's robots, written by Houston writer Betty Nolley (she's been published in **New Pathways** and **Ad Astra**, so you may have read some of her work). The fiction's "Cellarman" by Kurt Hyatt, who's been published in **Space and Time**. Issue #3 should be ready to go to press soon.

Dave's published a little newsletter called **Spectrum**, for members of the Cincinnati mental health community. He has garnered several clients through this undertaking, and is excited to discover that other people sincerely believe in what he's trying to do. He's hoping to get another issue of this newsletter out this month, since the response has really been quite good. He's discovered a Macintosh group which has a Hypercard SIG, so twice a month attends their meetings. He's also taking a training course in volunteering for medical and social service organizations. This means that four nights a week he doesn't get home until after 10 PM. (He's finding commuting to Cincinnati daily a bore - approximately 60 miles one way - but you can't have it both ways!)

Dora's actually walking. She MAY have come out with the first real word, which was yum yum, though this may just be a noise of pleasure made while eating. She gets quite excited when she sees a dog, and sometimes makes a noise that sounds like, "Dag!" (She almost jumps out of her back carrier when we see a dog; I hope she never actually manages to do this. So far in several months of riding in the carrier, she's only had one accident, when I tripped over a curb, and she grazed the sidewalk.)

More animal adventures: one morning when I put the trash out, I discovered an opossum in the garbage can. I thought at first he was dead, but as I put the trash in the other can, he opened his eyes and bared his teeth. I put the can on its side, figuring he could crawl out, and went about my various jobs. A few hours later, when Dora and I went to town, I checked the can, and he was still there. When we came back about an hour and a half later, he was still there. I dumped him out of the can, and he just lay there. I've read about these animal's "playing possum" behavior, though I'd never observed it before. However, I thought this possum was carrying it to extremes. Perhaps about 45 minutes later, he decided to slowly roll over and get to his feet. He stalked off into the woods VERY slowly, lifting his feet high, like a cat in the snow that doesn't want to get its feet wet.

Gradeschoolers insist on being involved in extracurricular activities, and Marlene's activity of choice is the Brownies. So far the group has participated in quite a few interesting activities; so far I've not been asked to do much mother-type contributing beyond baking a pumpkin pie! I think she'll be old enough for Pee-Wee basketball next year, but she seems to be more interested in being a cheerleader than a player.

She was a "fairy princess" for Halloween, and Dora was Little Red Riding Hood (since we all had to go trick or treating, I figured I'd dress the little one up too!). My mom would make us elaborate Halloween costumes, but I never have the patience to make more than catch as catch can ones. This one consisted of a "church dress" and "church shoes", a wand that was actually a soap bubble maker, a headband decorated with flowers, coat hanger wings, glitter makeup and sticky stars. We made a jack o lantern, of course - Marlene drew the face and I carved it.

What's small town America up to these days? If Ripley is any indicator, it's very much embroiled in picayune moral and ethical issues. At this time last year, it was whether or not civic organizations should have the right to rent the high school gymnasium to hold dances. When it transpired that these dances would be BYOB, the school board got very inflamed, and painted a totally erroneous view of alcohol allowed on the premises during the day, with both instructors and students having access to it. Though the state school board saw nothing wrong with allowing BYOB at adult dances taking place on the premises of a school,

the local board ended up banning alcohol entirely, and in effect banning dances too. The Gulf War eventually took precedence and this issue was forgotten. Now it's the board members fighting among themselves, and accusing each other of unprofessionalism. They all write rabid ungrammatical, inaccurate, definitely unprofessional letters to the newspaper. (Since I'm writing this before the November 5 election, I'll add that none of these letters have helped any board member's campaign for election or reelection!) Apparently Ripley is providing a lot of entertainment via our newspaper for people in other communities who find all this petty bickering ridiculous.

To top this off, we have a mayor who is as uneducated, ungrammatical and unprofessional as they come. He refuses to do any sort of "mayor type" things that people expect of a mayor, like issue proclamations, speak at community events or even campaign in his own behalf. His most recent exploit has been to adopt a black bear cub (Marlene and I saw him walking it around on a leash one evening, though we haven't seen it since). A lot of people were rather disturbed by this animal's presence in the community, so he may have gotten rid of it (I hope by giving it to a zoo where such a creature belongs and can be cared for properly), but not before he wrote a letter to the paper in the bear's defense. This has given rise to all sorts of jokes, like the campaign slogan of one of his opponents: "Can Ripley bear four more years of this?"

In the mayor's defense, he's managed to get several government grants for community improvement (paving streets, improving low income properties, street signs and dismantling abandoned buildings). Also the village has bought new heavy equipment during his tenure. On the advice of a tax consultant, he raised the village taxes, not a popular move, but probably necessary as the village was (and still is) severely in debt. He's totally honest about what he thinks the community needs, and really quite likeable, though sometimes he comes across as a do-nothing hillbilly.

Well, enough of my own rabid maanderings. I'll let you know how this all turns out!

(Update, November 6: Well, we have a new mayor. I guess we'll see what happens. We know him in sort of a sideways fashion, as his grandson is in Marlene's class, and his brothers run the local hardware store. However, as far as I can tell, he has little more to recommend him than the former mayor. As far as the school board goes, the member who was up for reelection and wrote the snidest letters to the paper, which in my opinion should have severely damaged his credibility, was reelected.)

Smoke from the forest fires in Kentucky blanketed the town the other day, and the sun tried valiantly to break through the haze. For much of the day, the world looked as it does early in the morning when the fog's rising off the river. The smell of smoke permeated even the house. When Marlene got home from school, her first question to me was "Did you smell the gas?!" When I said, "You mean the smoke" she corrected herself, and told me that the smell had gotten the "kindergarteners stomachached."

You may have noticed the article on Carmen Sandiego in TIME a few weeks ago. For those of you who haven't had a chance to view the TV show, try to take it in - it's fun to watch and quite challenging. (Actually more so than the computer game, which only takes you so far, from rookie to ace detective, and then won't let you play anymore, unless you choose a new identity, and start over at rookie.) Basically it's a game show in which three contestants (ages 11-14 or so) have to answer all sorts of geographical questions while chasing the crook all over the world. The person who catches the crook then has the opportunity to chase Carmen Sandiego across seven countries (or seven of the United States) by putting markers on a huge unmarked map. (The country boundaries are there, but not their names.) He has forty-five seconds to do this. The prize for doing this successfully is a trip to anyway in the lower 48 states. We've been watching the show every afternoon since it started September 30, and very rarely has a person been able to do this in 45 seconds! For me, knowing where the various United States are on the US map is easiest, knowing where the African countries are the hardest. MR really enjoys trying to answer the questions, even though I think she's often just guessing.

Irked at the Postal Service? Grumpy about all those stamps that have somehow lost their sticky and that the PO says that you can't legally use? Even though I worry that I may be accused of trying to defraud the Postal Service if I put glue on the back of such stamps and try to use them, I still hang on to them. I've discovered that they still are worth something. You can redeem unuseable stamps at the PO for a major portion of their value. They have to be still stuck to the envelope; ones torn off the envelope aren't acceptable.

I nevertheless soaked off a number of torn-off stamps, and stuck them in an envelope (which I promptly lost). I don't know if these are redeemable or not, as I haven't taken them to the post office. Other than this, I don't see that the postal service has done a lot of nice things lately! There's now a surcharge on oversize envelopes, even if there's enough postage weight-wise. Our post office raised the box rent so we're now paying \$92 a year for Box 98, and won't deliver mail to our street address because we have a PO box!

Well, enough complaining. Can you believe that this time I actually haven't lost the most recent copy of the APA, and can make some mailing comments? Here goes:

BONNIE: I heard a segment on the cartographers' dilemmas re all the changes in the world on NPR one evening! I'm impressed to observe how quickly some of these kids' shows, like Carmen Sandiego, have been incorporating the changes and new names. (It also indicates how current these shows are. If you've ever had the opportunity to watch any broadcasts of instructional television, you'll have noticed that some of them are ANCIENT. They're still airing segments of "Mr. Rogers" that are almost 20 years old! Nothing wrong with this, but I think children would find it rather confusing - one week Mr. Rogers' hair is still dark, the next it's almost totally gray; one week Prince Tuesday hasn't been born yet, the next he's attending school!)

GUY: It's very good to hear from you again. I hope to see more about Jesuit philosophy. My own knowledge is rather limited, most of it garnered from a textbook by Sophia Lyon Fahs, The Church Across the Street. (We used this book in Unitarian Sunday school when I was in junior high, although it's actually written for a somewhat older age group, in my opinion. Its chapters discuss the various Protestant denominations; Catholicism, including a chapter devoted entirely to the Jesuits; and a very brief nod to Judaism.) I wished I'd known more so that I could defend the Jesuits intelligently a few months ago, when my sister-in-law Donna (whose religious outlook is VERY fundamentalist) was attacking them violently during a discussion with Dave one evening. She apparently had run across some Jesuits at Xavier University who had really rubbed her the wrong way. Dave, on the other hand, since attending Xavier, has gained a lot of respect for the Jesuits, even though he doesn't know much more about their religious philosophy than I do. I tried to interject that the Jesuits were very service-oriented, but it doesn't pay to get caught in the cross-fire of any sort of discussion between Powells!

The discussion continued the next morning, with a slightly different slant. Donna, of course, believes that the Bible is God's absolute word, and as such it cannot be questioned. Dave and I tend to feel that it must also be considered as an historical document. (I like the Jersusalem Bible because it does put the various books into their historical context, unlike the Protestant Bibles I was introduced to when I was a kid.) Anyway, you can imagine the flurry of words around the breakfast table! Dave was trying to explain the essence of Zen to Donna, and Donna was trying to say that Zen is nonsense, probably a trap thought up exclusively by Satan to catch religiously confused people! Since it was Sunday, she and her husband were intending to attend church; I suggested that they might consider skipping it, as they'd already had the sermon!

AUDREY & GABE: Thanks for sharing Ladle Rat Rotten Hut; this is a story I grew up with! My mom has a typewritten version in her "little bit of everything" scrapbook that she started back in the 1940s. We always had quite a fascination for word tricks, like this story, spoonerisms, etc. While still on this subject, I recall a book that was a collection of nursery rhymes written in French, which, when read, came out to be the English versions of the poems, with a French accent. (The French words, of course, made absolutely no sense if you tried to read them as French sentences.) Having only a vague idea of French pronunciation when I was in grade school, there were only a few of these rhymes I was able to figure out.

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Well, the "mommys (and wives) aren't allowed to get sick syndrome" definitely still exists! This even though the flu epidemic sweeping this part of the country has swept up every member of our family. Fortunately, I'm over the worst of it, just in time to get a phone call from school telling me to come fetch MR, who's running a temperature of 100!

*Joannah*





# At the last possible second . . .

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## Where does time go?

Now that we're getting news feeds on our BBS, I have discovered that my time is even more precious (not to mention over-booked) than ever before. I am trying to follow a number of the groups, namely alt.beer, alt.sewing, alt.society.cu-digest, and my two favorites, alt.folklore.computers and alt.folklore.urban. When we start getting some of the bigger groups I plan on following rec.music.cd and rec.crafts.brewing and misc.consumers.

Meanwhile, I am still trying to make my way through the previous three years of stuff in the Computer Underground Digest (CuD) and through the back issues of the EFF Effector. Which brings me to...

### Stoll, Crackers and the Computer Underground

The relationship between Cliff Stoll and other parties interested in the topic of computer intrusion is often quite hostile. Some members of the CU (computer underground) believe that Stoll has done nothing but write a book for self-promotion, rather than to explain computer cracking to the non-computer literate. They see Stoll as saying little other than

"Hey, look at me! I'm a wild and crazy fun guy!" Others berate his book for not providing hints on how to break into computer systems (!). The Cuckoo's Egg does seem to be written with the non-computer literate in mind. That, in my opinion, is one of it's strengths. I think it serves as a good introduction into the ways computers are hooked up, and does a good job of stressing the importance of the big computer networks.

On the other hand, Cliff does a dandy job of name-calling. He calls crackers "hackers," which has lots of folks in the UC riled up, as there is a definite difference between the two, and the once perfectly acceptable word "hacker" is getting even more bad associations. Stoll also calls crackers "varmints" and other unfavorable terms, which has resulted in some very interesting article about sociology in CuD as well as a number of complaints about the wisdom of name-calling.

Furthermore, many crackers feel like they're getting bad press for things that they don't do, didn't do, and aren't interested in doing. From what I've been reading, I get the impression that most crackers are simply *explorers* — they want to get on different sys-

tems to explore them, not to wreck the data they find or for personal gain. But from Stoll's book, one does come away with the idea that all crackers are bad, evil people who cause serious damage (for example, by screwing around with the programs that control radiation-treatment medical procedures).

I enjoyed reading The Cuckoo's Egg, and I still like the book. I think it makes a wonderful introduction to computer issues. However, I also agree with critics who think the book does not present a balanced picture. On the other other hand, I don't think the book was ever *intended* to present a balanced picture. The Cuckoo's Egg is the story of one man's search for the crackers in his computer system, and the things he learned along his way. It is a very personable book, written by a personable guy and it should not be considered to be the definitive book about crackers.

### Christmas Plans

There are only a couple of weeks left before Christmas, and I *still* have shopping left to do. Once I stop to consider just how much stuff I am trying to do this isn't too surprising. I can't even

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get the house clean, let alone do yet more stuff. Like I tell those persistent daily newspaper salesmen, "It's a good week when I've managed to read the Sunday paper by Thursday."

A few weeks ago I read an article in the Sunday paper about a new book that has come out about stress in women's lives. I don't remember the name of the book, but I do remember that it is an update of the old stress tables I first saw my freshman year in college. One of the new stresses (to hit the list) is "Christmas," and it has a fairly high rating as I recall. Not as high as say, "Death of a spouse," or "Loss of a job," but it is one of the higher ones. According to the author, the responsibility of buying and wrapping gifts, planning Christmas activities, sending out Christmas cards and the like falls upon the female head of the family. And from my experience, I can say that is certainly the case. It's no wonder I get more and more frantic the closer Christmas comes.

This year our Christmas plans should be a lot simpler and less stressful than usual, due to the fact that both Christmas and New Year's fall on a Wednesday. Since I only get two days off at Christmas and one day for New Year's, we can't travel very far. So, Gabe has agreed to staying home this year. Our current plans are to spend Christmas day with Bob & Connie; the weekend after Christmas up north with Gabe's parents. New Year's Day is still up for grabs, but I'd be willing to bet we either go to Bob & Connie's or we spend the day on the couch watching videos (or in the basement keeping the BBS company).

An other thing I did, and which I recommend others who are stressed out do, is take a pencil, a piece of paper (and if your math skills are as bad as mine, a calculator) and figure out just how many hours you really need each week. Start with 168 hours, then subtract what you really need for sleep, the number of hours you work per week, the amount of time you spend getting ready to go to work, the amount of time it takes to prepare and eat your meals, time you spend exercising, watching your favorite tv shows or reading newsgroups or looking at the newspaper or what-have-you, and all the other things you try to do each week. If you are like me, you will discover that there are fewer hours in a week than are required to do all of the things you're trying to get done. After completing this exercise I was still stressed out, but at least I knew why I was so stressed! Now I am trying to relax my expectations of what I can reasonably accomplish in a week's worth of time. It helps.

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## Reading

I'm sure I've been reading, but I can't even tell you what. I'm now two and a half months behind on my comics, 4 issues behind in The Utne Reader, and I'm still reading last week's Sunday paper.

I do recall reading Learning to Bow, which is the story of an American teacher's experiences teaching in Japan. This is pretty good, but it skips around a great deal; I thought it would have read better if it read more like a travel log and less like a collection of monographs on Japan.

A really *fun* book I recently came across was Good Night, Mr. Holmes. The heroine is none other than Irene Adler, Sherlock Holmes' adversary. The book is narrated by Ms. Adler's secretary, and begins at the point when they (secretary and Ms. Adler first meet) and continues until shortly after the Adventure in Bohemia. Ms. Adler is a very modern woman — actress, private inquiry agent and possessor of an intellect equal to that of Mr. Sherlock Holmes. Despite the fact she is presented as an criminal adversary of Holmes in the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle stories, here she is presented more as a rival. I really enjoyed Good Night, Mr. Holmes, and I hope it is merely the first in a series.

I'm currently reading James Randi's Flim Flam, (which I ended up purchasing after discovering that the library's only copy had been stolen).

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## About the Covers

Issue #74 (or the one with the image of the Earth on it) was simple clip-art. It came from a collection of public domain clip-art, the exact source of which is a mystery.

Issue #75 was a piece of art (or more accurately, a collection of writing paper) purchased at ConClave expressly for the covers. The artist's name is on there somewhere.

Issue #76 is another piece of clip-art, this one from a Holiday collection. This particular image is from the Designer's Choice PCX collection, and is available for downloading from our BBS.

Marking Time with . . .

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Volume 1: Stealing or Preserving the Art Form?  
My Escapades in Pan

OK, some of you may remember a few issues back where our editor mentioned that she had talked some friends into joining this . . . this *thing* called APA-TECH. I'm still not sure what to call it, but I dig it enough to write stuff for it.

I met our editor and her Gabe when I worked at the company where she is (last time I checked?) still working, starting there in March 1989. I escaped from there a little over two years ago, but still keep in touch; in fact, I delivered this on a recent visit up there. (More on that in another note.) So that's how I got here.

Since it's my first entry, I should introduce myself. Hi there. I'm Steve Popernack; it's pronounced just like it sounds. I'm 25, single, and live at the above address. Of the many things I do, the one that garners me the most cash is working as an S & P Solutions programming consultant currently assigned to the Timken Company, also of Canton. (The name of the company is sheer coincidence.)

But I'm also an amateur musician, and one of my activities will comprise most of this letter. I got my B.S. from the University of Akron, which in addition to having lots of beige buildings and asphalt has what could be the best university steel drum band in the nation. Many of the band's alumni have gone on to prominence in the steel drum world; not quite on the big-name level of Andy Narell but known by those who know.

This group was open only to percussion majors, so I was not able to play in the group, but I had ties to a few of them through the common thread of drum corps (also another topic for at least three other notes...but I digress.)

Two of these, Shelly Irvine and Ron Kerns, formed a company a couple of years ago -- Panyard Publications -- that touts itself as selling "Everything for the Steelband." And indeed they do, selling everything from imported recordings of steelband performances from Trinidad to arrangements designed especially for steelbands of various skill levels to the drums themselves.

The arrangements is where I come in. My company title would be "consulting proofreader" if I had my druthers, but Shelly and Ron would rather call me "Miracle Ear." I've been blessed/cursed with absolute pitch (the ability to identify pitches without resorting to a keyboard or other source of music) and it is this skill which brought me to the Panyard.

...OK...originally I was going to put the "Steel drums were invented in Trinidad" spiel here, but I guess if you really wanted to know about it you could look it up. (Actually, I can't find that one article I have somewhere in the piles of paper in my room...which would make a good story in itself if I could ever find it...)



So I skip ahead to the name. "Pan" is the hip term for "steel drum." For those of you who have seen the National Geographic TV segment on steel drums in Trinidad (Gabe and Audrey already got this lecture from me,) the interviewer's insistence on calling it "pohn" is his misinterpretation of the local accent. (You got eet, mon?)

Pan is huge in Trinidad; there are many steelbands ranging in size from 70 to over 100 performers that compete in Panorama festivals, with the finals held at Carnival time (just before Lent.) The bands' practice area is called the "panyard," from whence comes the company name.

Now out of all of the people who play, direct, and write for steelbands, there are maybe twenty who can read standard musical notation. The players learn their music by rote, and after one year's performance is done, there is no written record of the music. There are recordings, but it is well nigh impossible to transcribe a song from a full band recording into separate parts, so any school band who wanted to play a Panorama tune was out of luck.

Was out of luck. One of Panyard's first missions was to promote steelband music, especially these Panorama pieces, to a greater audience. So they made a deal with Pan TrinBago (the steel band governing body) to record some of this past year's performances and transcribe them onto staff notation.

During the two weeks before Panorama, Shelly and Ron travelled to Trinidad to record the songs that they chose to publish. They chose "Special Brew," "Pan Ecstasy," and "Musical Volcano," the last of which was played by the winning band, the Desperadoes.

Recording the tunes was no easy task. Since full band recordings are no good to work from (all of the drums sound alike, so it's impossible to tell a double second from a quad if they're playing in the same register) each part had to be played individually and a bit slower than normal (these are calypso tunes, at about 130-150 beats per minute.) The songs at full tempo can last up to 12 minutes, and some bands use nine different parts, so that's a lot of tapes.

I'll skip over most of the...let's say logistical...problems of getting some of the recordings made. Basically, the local idea is "these guys from the States are going to come down to Trinidad and steal the art form and get rich off of our work, so why should we go along with that?" So most of their recording time was spent waiting for someone to show up to play the part.

Well, as you could guess, the local view has a little merit, but is mostly dead wrong. You see, Panyard Inc. is not going to get rich doing this kind of work. It's too difficult to get the music recorded (local sentiments only making it worse,) and also the task of converting the music into notes is a major beefball.

[Sidebar: I make up my own cuss words when I would normally curse...at least I do in print. Onward...]

Which is where I came in. Once they returned from the island, they passed out the music to be transcribed. I got "Musical Volcano," Shelly and Ron got "Special Brew," and another guy got "Pan Ecstasy." Each of us worked in a different way.

Shelly and Ron were working around the single largest asset



in the Panyard arsenal: a Macintosh IIci or something like that. (I'm typing this on Mr. Neutron, a '286 clone, and am not really up to date on what all types of Macs are out there, but anyway.) Panyard Inc. (for it really is incorporated, and these guys are at times too serious about not "piercing the corporate veil" as their accountant puts it) sunk quite a lot of money into this and their software; among which the most prominent are PageMaker and Finale.

Many of you are probably familiar with PageMaker; does a lot and costs a lot too. Finale is to music publishing what PageMaker is to text publishing; it costs a lot and does virtually everything. Between these two software packages and their machines (also including a laser printer and a copier) PPI publishes everything in house (in the attic of the duplex where Ron lives, to be exact.)

So in the race to put these tunes to paper, those guys had the home court advantage. All of the tunes would have to be entered into Finale anyway to be published; they just eliminate the middle man. (By the way, Shelly is short for Sheldon; just in case you wondered why I say "guys" when I refer to them.)

Jeff (the "other guy") didn't put pencil to paper either. He keyed the notes in through a MIDI sequencer, and downloaded to the Mac. (and now in non-computerese) He listened to the music, played the part back on his synthesizer, which has the ability to record the notes played into it. Once the notes are all saved, he wrote them to a floppy disk and sent the disk to Ron, who read the disk and put the notes into Finale from there.

Now the biggest benefit of Jeff's method (the machine records exactly what you play) is also the biggest headache (the machine records exactly what you play.) If you're off by a little bit, the machine records that little bit as what it should be. And in a nine-part song that is 10 minutes long, there are lots of little bits that add up to one messed up Finale file. So the time saved in initial entry was lost due to clean-up.

I can claim the "natural" method of transcribing music; I listened to the tape, heard the notes, and wrote them on the staff. For most people, there's an intermediate step called "plunking out what they think the part is on a piano" which makes transcribing a hassle.

But due to my blessing/curse, I can skip the keyboard and go right to paper. That doesn't make transcribing a breeze -- I still have to guess when the player is improvising or messing up -- but I still beat the other guys with their new-fangled machines.

Naturally, in recognition of my overachievement, Shelly and Ron gave me...another piece to transcribe. For this I'll have to rewind again. The U of Akron steel band is known and respected (mostly) on Trinidad, and PPI has a special relationship with Len "Boogsie" Sharpe (who was one of the featured pan artists on that National Geographic special I mentioned above.) PPI is Sharpe's agent, and agreed to publish lots of his music.

So when I got done with my tune early, they gave me Boogsie's band's tune; "Pan in yuh Ras." (Ras is short for Rastafarian, and there's a long story behind the title, but yes it is a play on words. Tee. Hee.) They gave it to me during the sum-

mer, when I was busy chasing corps and beating up my car in Illinois (which will not be covered in a future letter,) so I was not able to finish it in time for them to take it to a convention (which will have been finished by the time this is published) in Anaheim CA.

But they do have "Musical Volcano" as well as my arrangements of "The Star-Spangled Banner," "The Entertainer," and "Maple Leaf Rag." The latter two (which are, of course, two of Scott Joplin's most famous piano rags) were some quickies I did over my Christmas vacation, in response to PPI's request for anything besides the typical calypso, of which they have plenty.

Well, that's about all for me. I'm writing this the night before I'm due to bring it to GT Buckfast (what does that mean anyway? It was on the Table of Contents page of APA-TECH 74) so if it's a bit unstructured or rambling, well then it reflects my state of mind. No mailing comments because (1) start this paragraph over and (2) I figured it would only be fair to let the current denizens of these pages comment on me before I do so.